



# Behind the Log

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[www.bsar.org](http://www.bsar.org)

## In this issue:

Search at Donna Buang, 15 April 2012	1
Blue Range Search, 20 August 2012	1
Steep Snow and Ice Training Report, July 2012	2
The BSAR Convener checks out the Haute Route	2
BSAR Training Weekend 27-28 October	4
Welcome to new BSAR members	4



Editor of Behind the Log – Ren Millsom  
Next issue May 2013 - deadline 30 April

### Search at Donna Buang, 15 April 2012.

Sam Eales a 30 year old, inexperienced, solo bushwalker was reported missing on Saturday 14 April 2012. Sam had planned to walk from near Healesville along Badger Creek to the summit of Mt Donna Buang over 3 days finishing on Friday. This area has thick scrub and is steep. He was one day overdue when BSAR was called on Saturday night.

Seventeen BSAR members responded to the call out, departing 5:35 am Sunday morning. At search base, the summit car park of Mt Donna Buang, the Police field coordinator gave us a briefing, noting that Sam did not have a map or a compass but had a GPS. The weather was good, sunny and no rain.

BSAR members were tasked to search Badger Creek and its tributaries inside an area bounded by 4WD tracks. One group of 4 searchers was to follow the creek downstream and meet a Police dog unit coming upstream. The other BSAR groups of 2 searchers each were to follow the tributaries of Badger Creek.

Our first group departed base at 8:48 am. At 9:49 am the missing person was found alive and well on a 4WD track by a Police vehicle transporting the last two BSAR groups to their search area.

Sam was in good condition despite being two days overdue. After being thanked by Sam and Police we repacked our gear and departed base after lunch. We arrived back in Melbourne at 2:45 pm.

*Jim Grellis, Field Organiser.*

### Blue Range Search, 20 August 2012

Eleven BSAR members responded to the callout for a man missing on the Blue Range on Sunday 19 August 2012. He had accompanied an experienced deer hunter friend on a trip to the northern end of the Blue Range near Rubicon; his first trip to the bush. He was carrying no food, phone or gear.

The two became separated late morning. Police were alerted later in the day after the friend had spent some hours trying to find his mate. Sergeant Greg Paul of Marysville Police, well known to many members as a former member of the Search and Rescue Squad, coordinated the local search effort into the evening. That search was unsuccessful and BSAR was called for the following morning.

Two members of the Police Search and Rescue Squad located the missing man safe and well at 9.30am the following morning, in a scrubby gully about 600m below where he became separated from his mate. He had spent a comfortable night as he was warmly clothed and the weather was fine.

The bus with the BSAR team was still en route at that stage, so it turned around and returned to Melbourne.

The first alert for this search was for a middle of the day departure, but BSAR's preference is for early morning starts; a more practical time for members, and it gets us to the search with good daylight searching time available.

*Duncan Brookes, Field Organiser.*

## Steep Snow and Ice Training, July 2012

BSAR has a Steep Snow and Ice classification to support the Police where alpine terrain is not safe without appropriate alpine equipment and skills. Steep Snow and Ice practice is intended for members who already have alpine skills, although over recent years more members with developing alpine skills have joined the training. The annual SSI training as it has currently evolved to, is conducted over two weekends.

The training this year was focused around familiarisation of the alpine equipment used by BSAR such as avalanche transceivers, probes, snow shovels and practice of alpine skills entailing self arrest, holding a fall while roped on snow and stretcher hauling including Z-Pulley systems.

The first weekend uses a day off snow to undertake instructional activities in a warmer environment to make best use of the time on the snow. For this year's dryland training we had 22 BSAR members attend at the Williamstown Police Station, the home of Police Search and Rescue on Sunday the 22nd July.

The focus for this day was on Avalanche Transceiver theory and practice (the Williamstown foreshore practice seen below) and rope skills supporting stretcher hauling run by a member of the Police Search and Rescue squad, with BSAR members broken into two groups to allow more focused practice.



The second weekend for the on snow component saw us return to Mt. Buller with 15 BSAR members on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of July. Inclement weather was experienced and given the snow conditions, we selected an area below the dam adjacent to Bourke St, known as the Bluff. This became our practice and overnight camping area, with the approval of the Mt. Buller Ski Patrol, who facilitated our entry onto the mountain resort and use of a lift up the mountain.

Over the course of the weekend we practised self arrest (see picture below), stretcher hauling, cramponing, with ice axe and crampons on the icy snow, followed by holding falls while roped, winding up with avalanche transceiver practice and awareness that instructors do put avalanche transceivers up snow gums, to keep you thinking!

This all wouldn't have been possible, without the police who provided transport and instruction, Mt. Buller Resort, Ski Patrol and the participants and the BSAR SSI organisers - Eric Krista, Frank Zgoznic, Jim Grellis and Peter Campbell.



BSAR members on the snow on Mt Buller watching a demonstration of how to self arrest.

*Eric Krista, Training Organiser*

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## The BSAR Convener checks out the Haute Route at Chamonix

Mark Oates, a BSAR member and Simeon Ranik from Police Search and Rescue and I visited the European Alps to ski the Haute Route in 2012. We chose late May for the trip, towards the end of the ski mountaineering season, hoping to get stable weather conditions.

However, the weather was anything but stable. Ferocious winds had battered the Alps the week before we arrived and some late blizzards had

increased the avalanche hazard and partly filled crevasses with unconsolidated snow. The Chamonix Guides Office advised that "conditions were very unusual and dangerous". More bad weather was on the way too.

We skied a day on the Grand Montets at Argentiere to acclimatize. There was plenty of firm and icy snow and even some powder up high. Simeon's back was very sore so unfortunately his skiing was somewhat limited.

Mark and I tackled the first section of the Haute Route from Chamonix to Champex during a 2 day window of good weather. After a long hot ski ascent of the Chardonnet Glacier we did a tricky ski abseil down the Col du Chardonnet onto the upper Saliena glacier and into Switzerland. After climbing the Fenetre de Saliena we traversed the upper Trient Glacier then descended steeply next to the Trient icefall. The reward for a short climb up to the Col des Escandies was the sight of the Val d'Arpette - one of the best ski runs on the entire route.

We skied cautiously as avalanche debris was prominent on most of the slopes on the south side of the valley. We were lucky to spot a Chamois trudging across the snow in the distance. We were the only party to get through on this day, which is most unusual for the Haute Route. We had a late lunch and sent an OK message with my Spot tracking device to notify Simeon of our location.

Walking out down the valley we were greeted by a bus which took us out to the efficient Swiss railway. We returned to Chamonix by train after spending a night in Martigny. The huts further along the Haute Route were all closing due to ongoing bad weather and dangerous conditions, so the rest of the route was effectively closed.

After waiting out two days of bad weather in Chamonix, Mark and I attempted to ski the steep Millieu glacier route on the Aguille d'Argentiere. I nearly reached the summit, but deep wet snow halted my progress. We returned to Argentiere Hut, where we had a nice dinner with Simeon and two German friends, Andy and Heiko.

A Norwegian skier had died attempting to ski the Millieu Glacier route after the bad storm about two weeks earlier after he was caught in an avalanche.

Leaving Argentiere Hut, Mark and I then climbed the Col du Passon, and variant start for the Haute Route. The ski traverse was icy and exposed and the final section to the Col required ice axes and crampons.



Mark and I teamed up with a couple of friendly locals for the long ski descent back down to Le Tour. The snow became deep and wet as we descended. We had to scramble down a short slippery steep section near the bottom when the snow ran out. This was another long, hard but rewarding day.

We sat out more days of bad weather and visited the many good gear shops in Chamonix and Argentiere. On our last day of good weather we crammed into the Aguille du Midi cable car that was packed with other ski mountaineers. I chatted to some friendly French Alpine Soldiers who heading up to do some alpine training. They said a local "speed flyer" had died yesterday after launching from the Aguille du Midi. Speed-flying is a type of paragliding and involves using a fabric wing like a parachute to descent at speeds of up to 120 kph

We commenced our 17km ski descent of the Vallee Blanche glacier tour amid breathtaking alpine scenery under a clear blue sky. After a fast run on icy snow down to the Glacier du Geant we descended cautiously off route down the right side of the intimidating Seracs du Geant. We regained the route on the Glacier du Tacul and continued down the wide expanse of the Mer de Glace (the Sea of Ice).

Markers on the climb from the glacier back to the Montanvers tourist railway highlight the massive retreat of the Mer de Glace over the last century. The railway was still closed due to fallen timber so it was a long but nice walk back to the cafe at Chamonix.

Many people die skiing and climbing around the Mont Blanc massif every year due to avalanches, rock fall and crevasse falls. The terrain can be very dangerous and uncompromising. First time ski mountaineers to this region are well advised to hire a mountain guide.

Our trip ended on a high. We were not able to ski the full Haute Route but we had several days of good ski mountaineering in the European Alps. We shall return.

*Peter Campbell*



## BSAR Training Weekend 27-28 October 2012

**NOTE: Closing date is Wednesday, 10th October.**

Our annual training weekend, held near Eldorado in Victoria's north-east, will cover search skills (gps, radios, line searching) together with navigation through participation in a VRA rogaine.

Police bus transport will be provided, departing early Saturday morning from our rendezvous area in Green Street, Northcote and returning early Sunday evening.

Bring camping equipment, your BSAR manual, lunches and filled water bottles.

Delegates please register members/prospective members by emailing [training@bsar.org](mailto:training@bsar.org) the completed registration form by 10th October.

Bushwalking Victoria members, should email completed registration forms to [training@bsar.org](mailto:training@bsar.org) directly.

Any questions about the weekend, please contact Neville Byrne (details from training notice previously circulated by email).

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### Welcome to new BSAR members

BSAR warmly welcomes the following new members:

As individual members of Bushwalking Victoria,

John McGauran  
Anna Papij  
Richard Mielnik  
Evan Howard  
Elke Nicholson

As a member of a Bushwalking Victoria club,

Chris Brack	Monash Bushwalking and Outdoors Club
Callum Brown	alpineSAR
Kirilee Chaplin	Monash Bushwalking and Outdoors Club
Peter Croxford	alpineSAR
Gary Gray	Victorian Mountain Tramping Club
Timothy Martin	Monash Bushwalking and Outdoors Club
Andrew Seward	Victorian Mountain Tramping Club

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**Behind the Log**